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SUBJECT: COMMUNIST PARTY SCHOOL PROFESSOR SAYS IVP CHANGED HIS TEACHING ON ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Niu Xianfeng, an Associate Professor at China's Central Communist Party School, said that participation in an International Visitor's Program (IVP) in the United States in September 2006 changed the way he teaches his students, many of whom are high-level Communist Party officials from provinces throughout the country. Niu said that on his first trip to the United States, with stops in Washington, D.C., New York, Alabama, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and California, he was impressed by both the strength of the economy and the freedom of citizens to express their views. Most importantly, Niu said he now believes democracy is the best political system and the sooner China becomes democratic, the better. End Summary.

WHAT A LONG, STRANGE TOUR: A COMMUNIST IN ALABAMA

¶2. (SBU) Niu Xianfeng, Associate Professor in the Social Development Institute at China's Central Communist Party School, traveled to the United States September 9-30, 2006 on an International Visitors Grant. Niu first was nominated by the Embassy's Economic Section in ¶2005. Niu's research and teaching focuses on rural development, public policy, and local governance, and he previously served as Vice Governor of Qijiang County in Chongqing Municipality. Niu's visit to the United States included stops in Washington, D.C. (American politics, NGO management, United States-China relations, agricultural policy), Philadelphia (American politics and history), New York City (public administration and finance, role of religion in American life), Huntsville and Birmingham (economic development, local governance, civil rights), Lincoln (local governance, elections, rural development), and San Francisco (corporate responsibility, agricultural policy, economic development).

¶3. (SBU) Niu said from a personal standpoint, Alabama was the most interesting stop. He said the Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham was especially enlightening with regard to equality in the United States. Niu added that seeing economic development from the perspective of the Southern United States was particularly useful, as he was able to observe differences in industrial structure between the South and the North and what he described as the slower pace of economic development in the South. Most impressive to Niu, however, was that despite Alabama's historic social and economic struggles, the state continues to strongly support American democratic principles.

SHOW ME THE MONEY: VIEWS ON THE ECONOMY

¶4. (SBU) Niu said that after visiting all of the cities and interacting with government organizations at various levels, NGOs, and universities, he was impressed by the strength of the United States' economy. Niu said there is no comparison between the economies of the United States in China, and he noted China's shortage of resources and comparatively low rate of consumption when

compared to the United States. Niu said he was especially impressed by San Jose's knowledge economy and the financial markets in New York. He also said that China's economic policymakers and businessmen focus exclusively on profits, while American companies also include a social responsibility component in their operations.

FREE AT LAST? CHINA'S ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

¶15. (SBU) Niu said that he previously thought democracy was one of many good political systems and that democracy required a strong economy to be successful, but he stated that the IVP's most profound impact was changing this view. Niu said that after seeing poor regions in the United States and talking to a number of people about the importance of elections, he realized that economic development is not a prerequisite for democracy. Niu said China needs more elections. The sooner China becomes democratic the better, Niu added.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT: REACHING OUT TO CADRES

¶16. (SBU) Niu said that he already has incorporated his newly acquired thoughts on economic and political reform into his classroom teaching at China's Central Communist Party School. In classes that include high-level provincial government officials (such as Deputy Governors) and other Beijing-based Party cadres, Niu said that he has freely shared his views, including his support for China becoming more democratic, with his students.

RANDT